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Reno urged to probe Ray clues: Ex-FBI agent says distrust led him to keep documents hidden: since 1968.

For 30 years, the two little slips of paper have been hidden in bank vaults. Now, their owner wants to turn them over to Attorney General Janet Reno because he figures he finally can trust the government to do the right thing.

And with James Earl Ray near death from liver disease, Donald G. Wilson, the man in custody of the documents, figures the time has come to reveal the secret he has kept since shortly after the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. was assassinated.

As an FBI agent in Atlanta in 1968, Wilson said Monday, he took the two pieces of paper from Ray's car and did not turn them over to his higher-ups because he felt he could not trust them.

A photocopy of one slip looks like an itemized list with five words with figures next to them that appear to be dollar amounts. At the bottom appears a word that looks like Raul. The second slip also contains the name Raul, along with a phone number that apparently can be traced to Jack Ruby and the Vegas Club in Dallas. Ruby owned the club when he was arrested in 1963 for killing Lee Harvey Oswald.

Ray, serving a 99-year sentence, always insisted he was set up by a shadowy gunrunner he knew only as Raul.

Wilson showed the information to Fulton County District Attorney Paul Howard in a 90-minute meeting Tuesday morning. Howard said later his office does not have the resources to investigate and urged that Reno look into it.

Justice Department spokesman Bert Brandenburg said Reno will not decide what to do until the FBI investigates Wilson's allegations.

That's not good enough for the King family, which has stated its belief that Ray is innocent.

"I call for a thorough investigation of this new evidence to help bring at least some sense of closure to the pain my family and the American people have endured over unanswered questions surrounding this tragedy," King's widow, Coretta Scott King, said Tuesday.

Wilson, 55, said he feels as if he has come full circle.

"I went to college in the 1960s, in the formative years of the civil rights movement," he said. "It was a very unique historical and exciting time. I was very involved."

That idealism led him to join the FBI after graduating from the University of Tennessee College of Law.

"I was elated," he recalls about receiving his acceptance letter from FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover in March 1967. "I believed everything I had ever been told about the bureau. I told myself, 'Now, I'm going to have a chance to make a contribution about something. About the brutalities and the injustices.' It was not to be."

Shortly after joining the bureau, he said, "It became patently clear I had made a serious error in judgment. This, in fact, was a racist organization, bar none."

His first assignment was the Atlanta office, which had been investigating --- and harassing --- King.

Initially assigned to other duties, Wilson was one of the agents who impounded Ray's white Ford Mustang from a parking lot six days after King was shot in Memphis on April 4, 1968.

NOTE

He also was one of the agents who kept under surveillance a 14th Street house where Ray had rented a room. One day, Wilson said, he and his partner noticed a man who looked like Ray leaving a nearby diner. Headquarters told the agents not to pick up the man.

"I thought that was bizarre," Wilson said. "But I was not surprised."

A short time later, Wilson and two other agents broke into Ray's apartment and removed some materials.

Wilson would work for the FBI in Cincinnati, Washington and Greensboro, N.C., before leaving the bureau in 1977. He is now president of a career management company.

For 29 years, only his wife knew about the papers.

"Who could you really trust with something like this?" he answers when asked why he didn't come forward sooner. "Not knowing the answer to that, I felt it best to keep quiet."

Last year, he saw the Kings ask Tennessee officials to allow Ray to have a trial.

"I was disheartened to watch the judicial system of Tennessee turn its back on this family," Wilson said. "At that point in time, I made a decision: I think I can help these people."

He told the Kings about the documents and offered to testify. When it looked like Ray would not get a trial, he went public with the information.

"It's funny how things work out," Wilson said. "I joined the FBI because I wanted to do something in the civil rights field. I finally did something."

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